



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ADDRESS.

By JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, D.C.L., LL. D.,

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Three years ago I was one of those who gathered in the Sanders Theatre to commemorate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of a college founded to perpetuate living learning chiefly by the help of three dead languages, the Hebrew, the Greek and the Latin. I have given them that order of precedence which they had in the minds of those our pious founders. The Hebrew came first because they believed that it had been spoken by God himself and that it would have been the common speech of mankind but for the judicial invention of the modern languages at Shinar. Greek came next because the New Testament was written in that tongue, and Latin last as the interpreter between scholars. Of the men who stood about that fateful cradle swung from bough of the primeval forest, there were probably few who believed that a book written in any living language could itself live.

For nearly two hundred years no modern language was continuously and systematically taught here. In the latter half of the last century a stray Frenchman was caught now and then and kept as long as he could endure the baiting of his pupils. After failing as a teacher of his mother-tongue, he commonly turned dancing-master, a calling which public opinion seems to have put on the same intellectual level with the other. Whatever haphazard teaching of French there may have been was, no doubt, for the benefit of those youth of the better classes who might go abroad after taking their degrees. By hook or by crook some enthusiasts managed to learn German¹ but there was no official teacher before DR. FOLLEN about sixty years ago. When at last a chair of French and Spanish was established here, it was rather with an eye to commerce than to culture. It indicates a very remarkable, and, I think, wholesome, change in our way of looking at things that I should now be addressing a numerous

1. MR. GEORGE BANCROFT told me that he learned German of PROFESSOR SYDNEY WILLARD, who, himself selftaught, had no notion of its pronunciation.

**Copyright, 1890, by JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.*

Society composed wholly of men engaged in teaching thoroughly and scientifically the very languages once deemed unworthy to be taught at all except as a social accomplishment or as a commercial subsidiary. There are now I believe as many teachers in that single department of Harvard College as sufficed for the entire undergraduate course when I took my first degree. And this change has taken place within two generations.

Τῷ δ' ἡδὴ δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ἔβιαθ'.

I make this familiar quotation for two reasons: because CHAPMAN translates *μερόπων* "divers-languaged," which is apt for our occasion, and because it enables me to make an easier transition to what I am about to say; namely, that I rise to address you not without a certain feeling of embarrassment. For every man is, more or less consciously, the prisoner of his date, and I must confess that I was a great while in emancipating myself from the formula which prescribed the Greek and Latin Classics as the canonical books of that infallible Church of Culture outside of which there could be no salvation, none, at least, that was orthodox. Indeed I am not sure that I have wholly emancipated myself even yet. The old phrases (for mere phrases they had mostly come to be) still sing in my ears with a pleasing if not a prevailing enchantment.

The traditions which had dictated this formula were of long standing and of eminent respectability. They dated back to the *exemplaria Græca* of HORACE. For centuries the languages which served men for all the occasions of private life were put under a ban, and the revival of learning extended this outlawry to the literature, such as it was, that had found vent through them. Even the authors of that literature tacitly admitted the justice of such condemnation when they used the word *Latin* as meaning language *par excellence*, just as the Newfoundlanders say *fish* when they mean cod. They could be witty, eloquent, pathetic, poetical, competent, in a word, to every demand of their daily lives, in their mother-tongue, as the Greeks and Romans had been in theirs, but all this would not do; what was so embalmed would not keep. All the prudent and forethoughtful among them accordingly were careful to put their thoughts and fancies, or what with them supplied the place of these commodities, into Latin as the one infallible pickle. They forgot the salt, to be sure, an ingredient which the author alone can furnish. For it

is not the language in which a man writes, but what he has been able to make that language say or sing, that resists decay. Yet men were naturally a great while in reaching this conviction. They thought it was not good form, as the phrase is, to be pleased with what, and what alone, really touched them home. The reproach—*at vestri proavi*—rang deterrent in their ears. The author of 'Partonopeus de Blois,' it is true, plucks up a proper spirit:

"Cil clerc dient que n'est pas sens
Qu'escrive estoire d'antif tens,
Quant je nes escriis en latin,
Et que je perc mon tans enfin;
Cil le perdent qui ne font rien
Moult plus que je ne fac le mien."

And the sarcasm of the last couplet was more biting even than the author thought it. Those moderns who wrote in Latin truly *ne faisoient rien* for I cannot recollect any work of the kind that has in any sense survived as literature unless it be the 'Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum' (whose Latin is a part of its humor) and a few short copies of verse, as they used, aptly enough, to be called.

You all remember DU BELLAY'S eloquent protest, "I cannot sufficiently blame the foolish arrogance and temerity of some of our nation, who, being least of all Greeks or Latins, depreciate and reject with a more than Stoic brow everything written in French, and I cannot sufficiently wonder at the strange opinion of some learned men who think our vernacular incapable of all good literature and erudition." When this was said, MONTAIGNE was already sixteen years old, and, not to speak of the great mass of verse and prose then dormant in manuscript, France had produced in RABELAIS a great humorist and strangely open-eyed thinker, and in VILLON a poet who had written at least one immortal poem which still touches us with that painless sense of the *lachrymae rerum* so consoling in poetry and the burthen of which

"Ou sont les neiges d'antan?"

falters and fades away in the ear like the last stroke of Beauty's passing-bell. I must not let you forget that DU BELLAY had formed himself on the classics, and that he insists on the assiduous study of them. "Devour them," he says, "not in order to

imitate, but to turn them into blood and nutriment." And surely this always has been and always will be their true use.

It was not long before the living languages justified their right to exist by producing a living literature, but as the knowledge of Greek and Latin was the exclusive privilege of a class, that class naturally made an obstinate defence of its vested rights. Nor was it less natural that men like BACON, who felt that he was speaking to the civilized world, and lesser men who fancied themselves charged with a pressing message to it, should choose to utter themselves in the only tongue that was cosmopolitan. But already such books as had more than a provincial meaning though written in what the learned still looked on as *patois*, were beginning to be translated into the other European languages. The invention of printing had insensibly but surely enlarged the audience which genius addresses. That there were persons in England who had learned something of French, Italian, Spanish, and of High and Low Dutch three centuries ago is shown by the dramatists of the day, but the speech of the foreigner was still generally regarded as something noxious. Later generations shared the prejudice of sturdy ABBOT SAMSON who confirmed the manor of THORPE cuidam Anglico natione de cujus fidelitate plenius confidebat quia bonus agricola erat *et quia nesciebat loqui Gallice*. This was in 1182, but there is a still more amusing instance of the same prejudice so lately as 1668. "Erasmus hath also a notable story of a man of the same age, an Italian, that had never been in Germany, and yet he spake the German tongue most elegantly, being as one possessed of the Devil; notwithstanding was cured by a Physician that administered a medicine which expelled an infinite number of *worms*, whereby *he was also freed of his knowledge of the German tongue*."¹ DR. RAMESEY seems in doubt whether the vermin or the language were the greater deliverance.

Even after it could no longer be maintained that no masterpiece could be written in a modern language, it was affirmed, and on very plausible grounds, that no masterpiece of style could be so written unless after sedulous study of the ancient and especially of the Grecian models. This may have been partially, but was it entirely true? Were those elements of the human mind which tease it with the longing for perfection

1. From a treatise on worms by WILLIAM RAMESEY, physician in ordinary to Charles II, which contains some very direct hints of the modern germ-theory of disease.

in literary workmanship peculiar to the Greeks? Before the new birth of letters DANTE (though the general scheme of his great poem be rather mechanical than organic) had given proof of a style, which, where it is best, is so parsimonious in the number of its words, so goldenly sufficient in the value of them, that we must go back to TACITUS for a comparison, and perhaps not even to him for a parallel. But DANTE was a great genius, and language curtesys to its natural Kings. I will take a humbler instance, the *Chant-fable* of Aucassin and Nicolette, rippling into song, and subsiding from it unconsciously as a brook. Leaving out the episode of the King of Torelore, evidently thrust in for the groundlings, what is there like it for that unpremeditated charm which is beyond the reach of literary artifice and perhaps does not survive the early maidenhood of language? If this be not style, then there is something better than style. And is there anything so like the best epigrams of Meleager in grace of natural feeling, in the fine tact which says all and leaves it said unblurred by afterthought, as some little snatches of song by nameless French minstrels of five centuries ago?

It is instructive that, only fifty years after DU BELLAY wrote the passage I have quoted, BISHOP HALL was indirectly praising SIDNEY for having learned in France and brought back with him to England that very specialty of culture which we are told can only be got in ancient Greece or, at second hand, in ancient Rome. Speaking of some nameless rhymers, he says of him that

"He knows the grace of that new elegance
Which sweet Philisides fetched late from France."

And did not SPENSER (whose earliest essay in verse seems to have been translated from DU BELLAY) form himself on French and Italian models? Did not CHAUCER, and GOWER, the shapers of our tongue, draw from the same sources? Does not HIGGINS tell us in the 'Mirroure for Magistrates' that BUCKHURST, PHAER, TUBERVILLE, GOLDING, and GASCOYNE imitated MAROT? Did not MONTAIGNE prompt BACON to his Essays and BROWNE (unconsciously and indirectly it may be), to his 'Religio Medici'? Did not SKELTON borrow his so-called Skeltonian measure from France? Is not the verse of 'Paradise Lost' moulded on that of the 'Divina Commedia'? Did not DRYDEN'S prose and POPE'S verse profit by Parisian example? Nay, in our own time is it not whispered that more than one of our

masters of style in English, and they, too, among the chief apostles of classic culture, owe more of this mastery to Paris than to Athens or Rome? I am not going to renew the Battle of the Books, nor would I be understood as questioning the rightful place so long held by ancient and especially by Greek literature as an element of culture and that the most fruitful. But I hold this evening a brief for the Modern Languages and am bound to put their case in as fair a light as I conscientiously can. Your kindness has put me in a position where I am forced to reconsider my opinions and to discover, if I can, how far prejudice and tradition have had a hand in forming them.

I will not say with the Emperor Charles V that a man is as many men as he knows languages, and still less with LORD BURLEIGH that such polyglottism is but "to have one meat served in divers dishes." But I think that to know the literature of another language, whether dead or living matters not, gives us the prime benefits of foreign travel. It relieves us from what RICHARD LASSELS aptly calls, a "moral Excommunication;" it greatly widens the mind's range of view, and therefore of comparison, thus strengthening the judicial faculty; and it teaches us to consider the relations of things to each other and to some general scheme rather than to ourselves; above all it enlarges æsthetic charity. It has seemed to me also that a foreign language, quite as much as a dead one, has the advantage of putting whatever is written in it at just such a distance as is needed for a proper mental perspective. No doubt this strangeness, this novelty, adds much to the pleasure we feel in reading the literature of other languages than our own. It plays the part of poet for us by putting familiar things in an unaccustomed way so deftly that we feel as if we had gained another sense and had ourselves a share in the sorcery that is practised on us. The words of our mother-tongue have been worn smooth by so often rubbing against our lips or minds, while the alien word has all the subtle emphasis and beauty of some newminted coin of ancient Syracuse. In our critical estimates we should be on our guard against this charm.

In reading such books as chiefly deserve to be read in any foreign language it is wise to translate consciously and in words as we read. There is no such help to a fuller mastery of our vernacular. It compels us to such a choosing and testing, to so nice a discrimination of sound, propriety, position, and shade of

meaning, that we now first learn the secret of the words we have been using or misusing all our lives and are gradually made aware that to set forth even the plainest matter as it should be set forth is not only a very difficult thing calling for thought and practice, but an affair of conscience as well. Translating teaches us as nothing else can, not only that there is a best way, but that it is the only way. Those who have tried it know too well how easy it is to grasp the verbal meaning of a sentence or of a verse. That is the bird in the hand. The real meaning, the soul of it, that which makes it literature and not jargon, that is the bird in the bush which tantalizes and stimulates with the vanishing glimpses we catch of it as it flits from one to another lurking-place.

Et fugit ad salices et se cupit ante videri.

After all, I am driven back to my Virgil again, you see, for the happiest expression of what I was trying to say. It was these shy allurements and provocations of OMAR KHAYAM'S Persian which led FITZGERALD to many a peerless phrase and made an original poet of him in the very act of translating. I cite this instance merely by way of hint that as a spur to the mind, as an open-sesame to the treasures of our native vocabulary, the study of a living language (for literary, not linguistic, ends) may serve as well as that of any which we rather inaptly call dead.

We are told that perfection of form can be learned only of the Greeks, and it is certainly true that many among them attained to, or developed out of some hereditary germ of aptitude, a sense of proportion and of the helpful relation of parts to the whole organism which other races mostly grope after in vain. SPENSER, in the enthusiasm of his new Platonism tells us that "*Soul* is form, and doth the body make," and no doubt this is true of the highest artistic genius. Form without soul, the most obsequious observance of the unities, the most perfect *a priori* adjustment of parts, is a lifeless thing like those machines of perpetual motion admirable in every way but one—that they will not go. I believe that I understand and value form as much as I should, but I also believe that some of those who have insisted most strongly on its supreme worth as the shaping soul of a work of art have imprisoned the word soul in a single one of its many meanings and the soul itself in a single one of its many functions. For the soul is not only that

which gives form, but that which gives life, the mysterious and pervasive essence always in itself beautiful, not always so in the shapes which it informs, but even then full of infinite suggestion. In literature it is what we call genius, an insoluble ingredient which kindles, lights, inspires and transmits impulsion to other minds, wakens energies in them hitherto latent and makes them startingly aware that they too may be parts of the controlling purpose of the world. A book may be great in other ways than as a lesson in form, and it may be for other qualities that it is most precious to us. Is it nothing, then, to have conversed with genius? GOETHE'S 'Iphigenie' is far more perfect in form than his 'Faust,' which is indeed but a succession of scenes strung together on a thread of moral or dramatic purpose, yet it is 'Faust' that we read and hold dear alike for its meaning and for the delight it gives us. And if we talk of classics; what, then, is a classic if it be not a book that forever delights, inspires and surprises?—in which, and in ourselves, by its help, we make new discoveries every day. What book has so warmly embosomed itself in the mind and memory of men as the 'Iliad'? And yet surely not by its perfection in form so much as by the stately simplicity of its style, by its pathetic truth to nature, for so loose and discursive is its plan as to have supplied plausible argument for a diversity of authorship. What work of classic antiquity has given the *bransle*, as he would have called it, to more fruitful thinking than the Essays of MONTAIGNE, the most planless of men who ever looked before and after, a chaos indeed, but a chaos swarming with germs of evolution? There have been men of genius, like EMERSON, richly seminate for other minds; like BROWNING, full of wholesome ferment for other minds, though wholly destitute of any proper sense of form. Yet perhaps those portions of their writings where their genius has precipitated itself in perfect, if detached and unrelated crystals flashing back the light of our common day tinged with the diviner hue of their own nature, are and will continue to be a more precious and fecund possession of mankind than many works more praiseworthy as wholes, but in which the vitality is less abounding, or seems so because more evenly distributed and therefore less capable of giving that electric shock which thrills through every fibre of the soul.

But SAMUEL DANIEL, an Elizabethan poet less valued now than many an inferior man, has said something to my purpose

far better than I could have said it. Nor is he a suspicious witness, for he is himself a master of style. He had studied the art of writing, and his diction has accordingly been less obscured by time than that of most of his contemporaries. He knew his classics, too, and his duller work is the tragedy of 'Cleopatra' shaped on a classic model, presumably *SENECA*, certainly not the best. But he had modern instincts and a conviction that the later generations of men had also their rights, among others that of speaking their minds in such forms as were most congenial to them. In answer to some one who had denounced the use of rhyme as barbarous, he wrote his *Defence of Rhyme*, a monument of noble and yet impassioned prose. In this he says, "Suffer the world to enjoy that which it knows and what it likes, seeing whatsoever form of words doth move delight, and sway the affections of men, in what Scythian sort soever it be disposed and uttered, that is true number, measure, eloquence, and the perfection of speech." I think that *DANIEL*'s instinct guided him to a half-truth, which he as usual believed to include the other half also. For I have observed that truth is the only object of man's ardent pursuit of which every one is convinced that he and he alone has got the whole.

I am not sure that Form, which is the artistic sense of decorum controlling the coördination of parts and ensuring their harmonious subservience to a common end, can be learned at all, whether of the Greeks or elsewhere. I am not sure that even Style (a lower form of the same faculty or quality, whichever it be), which has to do with the perfection of the parts themselves, and whose triumph it is to produce the greatest effect with the least possible expenditure of material,—I am not sure that even this can be taught in any school. If *STERNE* had been asked where he got that style which, when he lets it alone, is as perfect as any that I know, if *GOLDSMITH* had been asked where he got his, so equable, so easy without being unduly familiar, might they not have answered with the maiden in the ballad,

"I gat it in my mither's wame,
Where ye'll get never the like?"

But even though the susceptibility of art must be inborn, yet skill in the practical application of it to use may be increased,—best by practice, and very far next best by example. Assuming, however, that either Form or Style is to be had without the intervention of our good fairy, we can get them, or at least a

wholesome misgiving that they exist and are of serious import, from the French, as Sir PHILIP SIDNEY and so many others have done, as not a few are doing now. It is for other and greater virtues that I would frequent the Greeks.

BROWNING, in the preface to his translation of the Agamemnon, says bluntly, as is his wont, "learning Greek teaches Greek and nothing else." One is sometimes tempted to think that it teaches some other language far harder than Greek when one tries to read his translation. MATTHEW ARNOLD, on the other hand, was never weary of insisting that the *grand style* could be best learned of the Greeks, if not of them only. I think it may be taught, or, at least, fruitfully suggested, in other ways. Thirty odd years ago I brought home with me from Nuremberg photographs of Peter Fischer's statuettes of the twelve apostles. These I used to show to my pupils and ask for a guess at their size. The invariable answer was "larger than life." They were really about eighteen inches high, and this grandiose effect was wrought by simplicity of treatment, dignity of pose, a large unfretted sweep of drapery. This object-lesson I found more telling than much argument and exhortation. I am glad that ARNOLD should have been so insistent, he said so many admirable things in maintaining his thesis. But I question the validity of single verses, or even of three or four, as examples of style, whether grand or other, and I think he would have made an opponent very uncomfortable who should have ventured to discuss HOMER with as little knowledge of Greek as he himself apparently had of Old French when he commented on the 'Chanson de Roland.' He cites a passage from the poem and gives in a note an English version of it which is translated, not from the original, but from the French rendering by GÉNIN, who was himself on no very intimate terms with the archaisms of his mother-tongue. With what he says of the poem I have little fault to find. It is said with his usual urbane discretion and marked by his usual steadiness of insight. But I must protest when he quotes four lines, apt as they are for his purpose, as an adequate sample, and then compares them with a most musically pathetic passage from HOMER. Who is there that could escape undiminished from such a comparison? Nor do I think that he appreciated as he should one quality of the poem which is essentially Homeric, I mean its invigorating energy, the exhilaration of manhood and courage that exhales from it, the same

that SIDNEY felt in 'Chevy Chese.' I believe we should judge a book rather by its total effect than by the adequacy of special parts, and is not this effect moral as well as æsthetic? If we speak of style, surely that is like good breeding, not fortuitous, but characteristic, the key which gives the pitch of the whole tune. If I should set some of the epithets with which Achilles lays Agamemnon about the ears in the first book of the *Iliad* in contrast with the dispute between Roland and Oliver about blowing the olifaunt, I am not sure that HOMER would win the prize of higher breeding. The '*Chanson de Roland*' is to me a very interesting and inspiring poem, certainly not to be named with the '*Iliad*' for purely literary charm, but equipped with the same moral qualities that have made that poem dearer to mankind than any other. When I am "moved more than with a trumpet," I care not greatly whether it be blown by Greek or Norman breath.

And this brings me back to the application of what I quoted just now from DANIEL. There seems to be a tendency of late to value literature and even poetry for their usefulness as courses of moral philosophy or metaphysics, or as exercises to put and keep the mental muscles in training. Perhaps the highest praise of a book is that it sets us thinking, but surely the next highest praise is that it ransoms us from thought. MILTON tells us that he thought SPENSER "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas," but did he prize him less that he lectured in a garden of Alcina? To give pleasure merely is one, and not the lowest, function of whatever deserves to be called literature. Culture, which means the opening and refining of the faculties, is an excellent thing, perhaps the best, but there are other things to be had of the Muses which are also good in their kind. Refined pleasure is refining pleasure too, and teaches something in her way, though she be no proper schooldame. In my weaker moments I revert with a sigh, half deprecation, half relief, to the old notion of literature as holiday, as

"The world's sweet inn from care and wearisome turmoil."

Shall I make the ignominious confession that I relish SKELTON'S Philip Sparowe, pet of SKELTON'S Maystres Jane, or parts of it, inferior though it be in form, almost as much as that more fortunate pet of Lesbia? There is a wonderful joy in it to chase away what SKELTON calls odious Enui, though it may not thrill our intellectual sensibility like its Latin prototype.

And in this mood the Modern Languages add largely to our resources. It may be wrong to be happy unless in the grand style, but it is perilously agreeable. And shall we say that the literature of the last three centuries is incompetent to put a healthy strain upon the more strenuous faculties of the mind? That it does not appeal to and satisfy the mind's loftier desires? That DANTE, MACHIAVELLI, MONTAIGNE, BACON, SHAKESPEARE, CERVANTES, PASCAL, CALDERON, LESSING, and he of Weimar in whom CARLYLE and so many others have found their University, that none of these set our thinking gear in motion to as good purpose as any ancient of them all? Is it less instructive to study the growth of modern ideas than of ancient? Is the awakening of the modern world to consciousness and its first tentative, then fuller, then rapturous expression of it,

"Like the new-abashed nightingale
That slinteth first when he beginneth sing,"

"Till the fledged notes at length forsake their nests,
Fluttering in wanton shoals,"

less interesting or less instructive to us because it finds a readier way to our sympathy through a postern which we cannot help leaving sometimes on the latch than through the ceremonious portal of classical prescription? GOETHE went to the root of the matter when he said, "people are always talking of the study of the ancients; yet what does this mean but apply yourself to the actual world and seek to express it, since this is what the ancients also did when they were alive?" That "when they were *alive*" has an unconscious sarcasm in it. I am not ashamed to confess that the first stammerings of our English speech have a pathetic charm for me which I miss in the wiser and ampler utterances of a tongue, not only foreign to me as modern languages are foreign, but thickened in its more delicate articulations by the palsying touch of Time. And from the native woodnotes of many modern lands, from what it was once the fashion to call the rude beginnings of their literature, my fancy carries away, I find, something as precious as Greek or Latin could have made it. Where shall I find the piteous and irreparable poverty of the parvenu so poignantly typified as in the 'Lai de L'oiselet'? Where the secret password of all poetry with so haunting a memory as in Count Arnaldos,

"Yo no digo esta cancion
Sino a quien conmigo va.?"

It is always wise to eliminate the personal equation from our judgments of literature as of other things that nearly concern us. But what is so subtle, so elusive, so inapprehensible as this *folle du logis*? Are we to be suspicious of a book's good character in proportion as it appeals more vividly to our own private consciousness and experience? How are we to know to how many it may be making the same appeal? Is there no resource, then, but to go back humbly to the old *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, and to accept nothing as orthodox literature on which the elder centuries have not laid their consecrating hands? The truth is, perhaps, that in reading ancient literature many elements of false judgment, partly involved in the personal equation, are inoperative, or seem to be so, which, when we read a more nearly neighboring literature, it is wellnigh impossible to neutralize. Did not a part of MATTHEW ARNOLD'S preference for the verses of HOMER, with the thunder-roll of which he sent poor old Thuoldus about his business, spring from a secret persuasion of their more noble harmony, their more ear-bewitching canorousness? And yet he no doubt recited those verses in a fashion which would have disqualified them as barbarously for the ear of an ancient Greek as if they had been borrowed of Thoroldus himself. Do we not see here the personal fallacy's eartip? I fancy if we could call up the old *jongleur* and bid him sing to us, accompanied by his *vielle*, we should find in his verses a plaintive and not unimpressive melody such as so strangely moves one in the untutored song of the Tuscan peasant heard afar across the sunsteeped fields with its prolonged fondling of the assonants. There is no question about what is supreme in literature. The difference between what is best and what is next best is immense; it is felt instinctively; it is a difference not of degree but of kind. And yet may we not without lese-majesty say of books what FERDINAND says of women,

“for several virtues
Have I liked several women; never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed
And put it to the foil?”

In growing old one grows less fanatically punctual in the practice of those austerities of taste which make too constant demands on our self-denial. The ages have made up their minds

about the ancients. While they are doing it about the moderns (and they are sometimes a little long about it, having the whole of time before them), may we not allow ourselves to take an honest pleasure in literature far from the highest, if you will, in point of form, not so far in point of substance, if it comply more kindly with our mood or quicken it with oppugnancy according to our need? There are books in all modern languages which fulfil these conditions as perfectly as any, however sacred by their antiquity, can do. Were the men of the middle ages so altogether wrong in preferring OVID because his sentiment was more in touch with their own, so that he seemed more neighborly? Or the earlier dramatists in overestimating SENECA for the same reason? Whether it be from natural predisposition or from some occult influence of the time, there are men who find in the literature of modern Europe a stimulus and a satisfaction which Athens and Rome deny them. If these books do not give so keen an intellectual delight as the more consummate art and more musical voice of Athens enabled her to give, yet they establish and maintain, I am more than half willing to believe, more intimate and confiding relations with us. They open new views, they liberalize us as only an acquaintance with the infinite diversity of mens' minds and judgments can do, they stimulate to thought or tease the fancy with suggestion, and in short do fairly well whatever a good book is expected to do, what ancient literature did at the Revival of Learning with an effect like that which the reading of CHAPMAN'S Homer had upon KEATS. And we must not forget that the best result of this study of the ancients was the begetting of the moderns, though DANTE somehow contrived to get born with no help from the Greek Hera and little more from the Roman Lucina.

As implements of education the modern books have some advantages of their own. I am told and I believe that there is a considerable number of not uningenuous youths, who, whether from natural inaptitude or want of hereditary predisposition, are honestly bored by Greek and Latin, and who yet would take a wholesome and vivifying interest in what was nearer to their habitual modes of thought and association. I would not take this for granted, I would give the horse a chance at the ancient springs before I came to the conclusion that he would not drink. No doubt, the greater difficulty of the ancient languages is believed by many to be a prime recommendation of them as

challenging the more strenuous qualities of the mind. I think there are grounds for this belief, and was accordingly pleased to learn the other day that my eldest grandson was taking kindly to his HOMER. I had rather he should choose Greek than any modern tongue, and I say this as a hint that I am making allowance for the personal equation. The wise gods have put difficulty between man and everything that is worth having. But where the mind is of softer fibre, and less eager of emprise, may it not be prudent to open and make easy every avenue that leads to literature, even though it may not directly lead to those summits that tax the mind and muscle only to reward the climber at last with the repose of a more ethereal air?

May we not conclude that modern literature and the modern languages as the way to it should have a more important place assigned to them in our courses of instruction, assigned to them moreover as equals in dignity, except so far as age may justly add to it, and no longer to be made to feel themselves inferior by being put below the salt? That must depend on the way they are taught, and this on the competence and conscience of those who teach them. Already a very great advance has been made. The modern languages have nothing more of which to complain. There are nearly as many professors and assistants employed in teaching them at Harvard now as there were students of them when I was in College. Students did I say? I meant boys who consented to spend an hour with the professor three times a week for the express purpose of evading study. Some of us learned so much that we could say "How do you do?" in several languages, and we learned little more. The real impediment was that we were kept forever in the elementary stage, that we had and could look forward to no literature that would have given significance to the languages and made them beneficent. It is very different now, and with the number of teachers the number of students has more than proportionally increased. And the reason is not far to seek. The study has been made more serious, more thorough, and therefore more inspiring. And it is getting to be understood that as a training of the faculties, the comparative philology, at least, of the modern languages may be made as serviceable as that of the ancient. The classical superstitions of the English race made them especially behindhand in this direction and it was long our shame that we must go to the Germans to be

taught the rudiments of our mother tongue. This is no longer true. Anglo-saxon, Gothic, Old High and Middle High German and Icelandic are all taught, not only here, but in all our chief centres of learning. When I first became interested in Old French I made a surprising discovery. If the books which I took from the College Library had been bound with gilt or yellow edges, those edges stuck together as, when so ornamented, they are wont to do till the leaves have been turned. No one had ever opened those books before.

"I was the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea."

Old French is now one of regular courses of instruction, and not only is the language taught, but its literature as well. Remembering what I remember, it seems to me a wonderful thing that I should have lived to see a poem in Old French edited by a young American scholar (present here this evening) and printed in the journal of this Society, a journal in every way creditable to the scholarship of the country. Nor, as an illustration of the same advance, in another language, should we forget Dr. FAY's admirable Concordance of the 'Divina Commedia.' But a more gratifying illustration than any is the existence and fruitful activity of this Association itself, and this select concourse before me which brings scholars together from all parts of the land, to stimulate them by personal commerce with men of kindred pursuits and to unite so many scattered energies in a single force controlled by a common and invigorated purpose.

We have every reason to congratulate ourselves on the progress the modern languages have made as well in academic as in popular consideration. They are now taught (as they could not formerly be taught) in a way that demands toil and thought of the student, as Greek and Latin, and they only, used to be taught, and they also open the way to higher intellectual joys, to pastures new and not the worse for being so, as Greek and Latin, and they only used to do. Surely manysideness is the very essence of culture, and it matters less what a man learns than how he learns it. The day will come, nay, it is dawning already, when it will be understood that the masterpieces of whatever language are not to be classed by an arbitrary standard, but stand on the same level in virtue of being masterpieces; that thought, imagination, and fancy may make even a *patois* acceptable to scholars; that the poets of all climes and of all ages "sing

to one clear harp in divers tones," and that the masters of prose and the masters of verse in all tongues teach the same lesson and exact the same fee.

I began by saying that I had no wish to renew the Battle of the Books. I cannot bring myself to look upon the literatures of the ancient and modern worlds as antagonists, but rather as friendly rivals in the effort to tear as many as may be from the barbarizing ploutolatry which seems to be so rapidly supplanting the worship of what alone is lovely and enduring. No, they are not antagonists, but by their points of disparity, of likeness, or contrast, they can be best understood, perhaps understood only through each other. The scholar must have them both, but may not he who has not leisure to be a scholar, find profit even in the lesser of the two if that only be attainable? Have I admitted that one is the lesser? *O matre pulchra filia pulchrior* is perhaps what I should say here.

If I did not rejoice in the wonderful advance made in the comparative philology of the modern languages, I should not have the face to be standing here. But neither should I if I shrank from saying what I believed to be the truth, whether here or elsewhere. I think that the purely linguistic side in the teaching of them seems in the way to get more than its fitting share. I insist only that in our College courses this should be a separate study, and that, good as it is in itself, it should, in the scheme of general instruction, be restrained to its own function as the guide to something better. And that something better is Literature. The blossoms of language have certainly as much value as its roots, for if the roots secrete food and thereby transmit life to the plant, yet the joyous consummation of that life is in the blossoms, which alone bear the seeds that distribute and renew it in other growths. Exercise is good for the muscles of mind and to keep it well in hand for work, but the true end of Culture is to give it play, a thing quite as needful.

What I would urge therefore is that no invidious distinction should be made between the Old Learning and the New, but that students, due regard being had to their temperaments and faculties, should be encouraged to take the course in modern languages as being quite as good in point of mental discipline as any other if pursued with the same thoroughness and to the same end. And that end is Literature, for there language first attains to a full consciousness of its powers and to the delighted

exercise of them. Literature has escaped that doom of Shinar which made our Association possible, and still everywhere speaks in the universal tongue of civilized man. And it is only through this record of Man's joys and sorrows, of his aspirations and failures, of his thought, his speculation and his dreams, that we can become complete men, and learn both what he is and what he may be, for it is the unconscious autobiography of mankind.—And has no page been added to it since the last ancient classic author laid down his pen?